A SPIRITUAL REVIEW FOR SISTERS

SPONSA REGIS

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OPERATIONS OF THE HOLY GHOST IN OUR SOUL

IN the hymns used at the celebration of Pentecost the Church details some of the perfections of this divine Author of grace and sanctity. He is called the Father of the poor, the Bestower of gifts, the Light of the heart, the true Comforter of the soul, its sweet Refreshment, its beneficent Visitor, its Rest in toil, its Shelter from heat, its Solace in affliction. He purifies what is defiled, waters what is parched, heals what is bruised. By Him the hardened heart must be softened, the erring heart recalled, the frozen heart inflamed. It is He that must speak to the soul, if it is to be reclaimed from sin and excited to justice.

Hence, if you have felt in the interior of your soul the emptiness of all that is not God, if you have desired to rise out of the slavery of your passions and begin at length to live for heaven, this interior light, this feeling, this desire, is the voice of the Holy Ghost. When we stifle this feeling, or repel this desire, therefore, it is the Holy Ghost Himself whom we resist; it is He whom we oppose and banish from our hearts; and yet without Him we cannot, as the Apostle teaches, advance one step on the way to heaven. All the blessed fruits of the redemption are communicated to us through the graces of the Holy Ghost. Without these graces even the Redeemer's saving Name would be for us but an empty sound; for "no man," declares St. Paul, "can say the Lord Jesus, save by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 12, 3).

Wonderful are the ways in which the divine Spirit works within us, infusing those graces which were purchased by the Blood of Jesus, to enlighten, to sanctify, to strengthen, to impress our souls with horror of sin and move them to virtue, to melt them into compunction, to inflame them with love for God and the desire

of heaven. "There are diversities of graces," continues the Apostle, "but the same Spirit, . . . and there are diversities of operations, but the same God, who worketh all in all" (1 Cor. 12, 4-6). Faith itself, the groundwork of our justification, "without which it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11, 6), is numbered by the Apostle among the effects which "the same Spirit worketh, dividing to every one according as he will" (1 Cor. 12, 11). And this faith, he tells us, must, in order to avail us, "work by charity" (Gal. 5, 6); and this charity, or love of God, is "poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us" (Rom. 5, 5). So that, from the first ray of spiritual light which is shed upon the soul, imparting to it a knowledge of God, to the crowning gift of final perseverance, which introduces it to the enjoyment of the beatific vision, we are dependent at every step we take on the graces of the Holy Ghost.

How great is the happiness of him whose soul is enriched by the presence of this divine Spirit working in it all these blessed effects according to the nature of its wants and its preparation to receive them! Surely, we cannot suppose that this bounteous and all-powerful Lord would descend into a heart without bestowing on it those precious blessings which He delights to distribute. When the Blessed Virgin Mary, bearing the Son of God, visited her cousin Elizabeth, what rich benedictions descended upon that favored family! Zachary was comforted, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, the Baptist in his mother's womb felt the presence of the Messias and was sanctified. And if the visit of Mary procured so many blessings for the house of Elizabeth, who shall estimate the blessings that flow into the soul which the Giver of all good gifts Himself, the Author of all graces and sanctity, deigns to visit. What these graces and privileges are, we shall now attempt to describe; this brings us to the topic of

SANCTIFYING GRACE.

Sanctifying grace is a permanent habit resident in our soul as long as we commit no grievous sin. When mortal sin enters, grace must depart. They are opposed one to the other in the same way as light and darkness. Sacred Scripture describes the opposition between the two as similar to that which exists between light and darkness, life and death, the new man and the old man, the kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of Christ. This has regard to mortal sin only. Venial sin does not carry with it the same fatal

consequences, though it too is a violation of God's law. In venial sin the malice of the act is not sufficient to involve a complete break with God. Hence a man may be guilty of many venial sins without forfeiting his privilege as a child of God.

St. Peter tells us, that through Christ God the Father has "given us great and precious promises: so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1, 4). St. John affirms that the regenerated are born, not of blood, but of God, because regeneration being a (spiritual) birth it must needs impart to the regenerated sinner the nature of his spiritual progenitor. The Fathers of the Church again and again extol the deification of man effected by sanctifying grace and compare the union of the soul with God to the commingling of water with wine, the penetration of iron by fire and employ other like similes.

According to the Fathers and theologians, "to partake of the divine nature," which is effected in us by sanctifying grace, means to become internally and physically like God and to receive from Him truly divine gifts, such as are proper to God alone and absolutely transcend the order of nature. This deification of the soul by grace is, therefore, assimilation of the creature to God.

Sanctifying grace is a real and actual sharing in the very nature of God. It is His own intimate life gratuitously communicated to His creatures. Think of it: it is the dawn of eternal life within our souls. This seed may be small, this dawn somber, yet it is none the less certain that sanctifying grace virtually contains in this life all the happiness of heaven; in a word, it brings what in reality is heaven into our hearts.

The state of glory does not differ substantially from the state of grace here below, but only by its perfection, its consummation, its development. It is like noonday splendor succeeding to the dawn. Is it any wonder that St. Leo the Great, carried away with this thought, exclaimed: "O Christian soul, recognize thy dignity," or that St. Jerome, writing to the Christian virgin Eustochium, could say: "Learn to be holily proud," or that St. Thomas affirms that the smallest atom of grace is worth more than the whole material universe? All these splendid results come to us because grace makes us "partakers of the divine nature." Truly, the soul of man in the state of sanctifying grace is an unspeakable prodigy.

Together with sanctifying grace there comes to our soul a noble retinue of other virtues: A) the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity; B) the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance; and C) the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost.

A. *The Three Theological Virtues.* The Council of Trent teaches that "Man through Jesus Christ, in whom He is ingrafted, receives in justification, together with the remission of sins, all these gifts infused at once — faith, hope and charity."

Faith may be called the spiritual eye of the soul. It is, according to St. Paul, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not" (Heb. 11, 1). *Why* do we believe? We believe on the authority of God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived. *What* do we believe? All truth revealed by God and proposed to us by His Church.

Hope is a virtue given us by the Holy Ghost in conjunction with sanctifying grace, by which we confidently expect from God all the means necessary for salvation. Hope buoys us up in the depressing vicissitudes of life, spurs us on to carry the cross courageously, relying on the veracity of God's promises to come to our aid and lead us on to perfection. Hope, then, cheers us on our way to the heavenly Jerusalem.

"And now there remain faith, hope and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. 13, 13). Charity is the great virtue by which we are impelled to love God, the supreme Good, with all the ardor of our being, above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves, for God's sake. Charity is the most excellent of all virtues, because it directly respects the divine goodness in itself. It flies, as it were, to the very heart of the Godhead and busies itself with the highest Good. Charity is ever mindful of the words of St. John: "God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him. . . . Fear is not in charity; but perfect charity casteth out fear" (1 John 4, 16, 18), and of the word of St. Paul: "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13, 10), and "the bond of perfection" (Col. 3, 14), and "the end of the commandment" (1 Tim. 1, 5), and of the word to the Romans (5, 5): "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us."

B. *The Four Cardinal Virtues.* With sanctifying grace come the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temper-

ance. The *object* of these virtues is to govern our intellect and order our will in their special dealings with created things, in order to guide these faculties to their destined end. In other words, it is not enough to be on good terms with our Creator; no, we must regulate our conduct with our neighbor according to certain norms. This moral virtue of prudence puts us on our guard against false standards that might lead us astray. It gives us an insight into the wiles of the world, the flesh and the devil. It counsels us to take unto ourselves "the armor of God," that we "may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect" (Eph. 6, 13).

Temperance also is necessary to the warrior of Christ according to the words of St. Paul: "And everyone that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things" (1 Cor. 9, 25). Again, it is from this great Apostle that we learn the lesson of grace, "instructing us, that we should live soberly and justly and godly in this world" (Tit. 2, 12).

As we go through life, other obstacles loom up that must be strenuously overcome. To be unsparing when sinful pleasure lures us we need fortitude. This virtue helps us to steer our bark safely between the jagged rocks that threaten to shipwreck us. It gives unusual courage to our otherwise depraved nature and helps us mightily to keep calm and recollected and to brave every storm for the sake of our virtue. It encourages us to assume voluntary mortifications and penances in order to gain the victory over our unruly nature, mindful of the word of the Apostle: "And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. 5, 24).

(To be continued)

Island Creek, Mass. L. M. DOOLEY, S.V.D.

HAVE YOU TRIED THE LITTLE WAY?

"ONLY your heart will be able to read this letter for I have trouble myself in deciphering it. . . . I have no more ink. I have been forced to *spit* into our inkwell to make some. . . . That makes you laugh, doesn't it?"[1]

Hope grows stronger among strivers for sanctity, when they realize that a Carmelite saint, in her monastic cell, was not above

[1] *Collected Letters of St. Therese.* New York, Sheed and Ward, 1949.

diluting her ink in such fashion. Nor was she afraid to mention it frankly in closing an inspiring letter. Moreover, the knowledge that spiritual advice could be thus signed and sealed should be a consoling reminder that the saints, while on earth, were not disembodied spirits. It also provides refreshing piquancy to offset the saccharinity with which so many well-intentioned persons persist in smothering a truly valiant woman.

The shower of roses, intended in the sentimental verbiage of her time to convey the idea of spiritual gifts, has hidden Therese Martin from many who never associate her with possible thorns. Her self-styled "Little Way," about which some discourse so complacently, does not advocate spectacular sanctity, yet it is far from being the easy task these people would have us believe.

Scripture declares that "All the glory of the king's daughter is within," and that this glory is "clothed round about with variety" (Psalm 44). Thus, the exterior manifestation of one soul's inner glory or sanctity may not appeal to another, who fails to discover holiness within a personality subject to peculiarities of time, place, environment and custom. What really matters is that a soul possesses the most confident love of God. It is in this possession that true holiness consists.

Many books have been written about Therese Martin. None succeed in producing so vivid and honest a portrayal as her autobiography. A first perusal of this history may be interesting, even revealing, but not until the book has been read a number of times does one discover the genuine Therese beneath the effusive metaphors she so often employs. Throughout the pretty phrasing stands firm her doctrine of the Little Way, which she defined as ". . . the way of spiritual childhood, the way of trust and self-surrender" (page 232). It advocates childlike humility beloved of God, not the childishness which some have read into this doctrine.

Her vocation, Therese declared, was love — a love so tender, so deep, so confident, that she gave herself to God in total abandonment, which, as Bossuet tells us, is "an accumulation and a compound of acts of the most perfect faith, of the most sincere hope and of the most pure and faithful love."[2]

The Litle Way consists in performing the ordinary duties of life extraordinarily well for the love of God. It is applicable to

[2]*States of Prayer*, Bossuet.

each state in life. St. Teresa of Avila calls it a "broad and royal road,"[3] along which men may travel securely, assured of the helping hand of God, if after stumbling they seek to rise and press forward again in all humility.

The Little Way is simple, in that it does not advocate harsh penances, the necessity of mystical phenomena, or the breath-taking exploits of certain saints whom most mortals must admire from afar. It is definitely not the false quietism which leads astray, but a positive approach to God, often requiring a blind as well as a strong faith. The Little Way is difficult because of a tendency to envision sanctity in a glamorous aura rather than in the prosaic circumstances and duties of everyday life.

It is an interesting and sometimes enlightening experience to hear people discussing St. Therese. Some claim to love her because she is "so sweet and dear." Some discern the heroine. Others consider her a petted darling in whom holiness was easily achieved, because her life had been spent in a spiritual atmosphere both at home and in the convent. Even religious will be heard to say, "Why wouldn't she be holy, living as she did in a family of saints with those pious sisters of hers directing every movement?" There is some truth in this question. Modern psychiatry recognizes environment rather than heredity as an influential factor in our lives. But Therese, while giving full credit to the influence of her unusual family, explains the extraordinary infusion of God's love within her by means of the doctrine of grace.

A keen self-analyst, Therese Martin had no illusions about herself. According to her testimony she was no sugar-fluff person, but a vital creature, proud, impetuous, strong-willed, sensitive and passionate, with a capacity for love which might have proved her undoing had she not turned it Godward in correspondence with grace. A study of her original photographs will reveal something of her character. The embellished pictures may conform to desires of idealization, but to those who dislike gilding the lily they savor of the ingenue. Copies of original photographs taken throughout her lifetime show a strong face, fine eyes, generous mouth and a determined chin, noticeable even in pictures taken when she was but three years old.

That she might have become other than she was, except for correspondence with God's grace, Therese knew full well, telling

[3]E. Allison Peers, *Life of St. Teresa of Jesus.* Sheed and Ward, N. Y. 1949.

us so herself. "With a heart such as mine I should so easily have been taken captive and had my wings clipped."[4] Thus she admits a capacity for affection which might have degenerated into weakness, had God not transformed it into strength. And again, "God has given me a faithful heart and when once I love, I love forever."[5] Early did she learn that the faithful hearts love deepest and suffer most keenly while seeking fulfillment in the Centre of all love.

Therese fully realized that with a heart as hers, had she not been surrounded by safeguards from birth, she might have become one such as Heloise, blinding her intelligence and prostituting the prodigality of her love. Frankly and humbly she writes, "No merit then is due to me for not having let myself be bound by false ties. Too well do I realize that without Him I might have fallen as low as St. Mary Magdalen."[6]

Impressions of Therese as garnered from contemporaries are varied. From her own writings we learn that she endured a very difficult adolescence, to which she frankly refers "as the most dangerous time of my life."[7] Frequently she alludes to her change of disposition from that of a sunny child to a reticent and often tearful girl. School life with its give and take proved troublesome for one who has ceased to find joy in the trivialities, which meant so much to her companions, many of whom thought the reserved Martin girl, with the crucifix worn conspicuously in her uniform belt, decidedly strange.

But who can understand the secrets of the King, or the manner in which He draws certain souls to higher sanctification? During this time, while Therese was being brought constantly closer to God, she was human enough to want to be "one of the crowd." Ruefully she relates her attempts to imitate others in acquiring popularity, and how dismally she failed. Such experiences did not embitter her but served to make her more dependent upon God. Natures like Therese love deeply. It is an earnest love, usually given only to a few and very different from the lighter affections which extroverts seem easily to bestow upon others. Persons like Therese give more than they can ever receive and, even though

[4] *Autobiography*, p. 78.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 78.
[6] *Autobiography*, p. 90.
[7] *Ibid*, p. 90.

they may endeavor to supernaturalize their feelings, humanly speaking, repudiation causes pain. Such is the price some souls must pay for sanctity.

Although in close union with God from an early age, Therese remained no passive angel on a pedestal. Her ardent nature found outlets in the so-called accomplishments which were the concessions of educators to young women of her time. She possessed an inquiring mind and enjoyed reading and studying. While she speaks of an interest in drawing, no mention is made of her having studied music; yet she must have loved the most mystic of the arts, which so often bridges the span between earth and eternity. After her entry into Carmel she records moments when the sound of distant music, perhaps somewhat nostalgic, reached her ear.

That she was talented, no one can doubt, but of her intelligence, heightened by deep spiritual perception, some fail to understand. She possessed a wisdom far beyond her years, best expressed in her own words. After quoting the Psalmist chanting, "Thou hast taught me, O Lord, from my youth, and till now I have declared thy wonderful works, and shall do so unto old age and grey hairs," she observes, "When will old age come to me? Surely, as well now as later: in the eyes of the Lord two thousand years are no more than twenty years . . . than a single day!"[8]

To her it had indeed been revealed that within the twenty-four years of her short life she would encompass the wisdom of the ages so well that venerable theologians, who pondered over every word she had written, found not only freedom from error but new illumination cast upon the life of the spirit, which learned men, weighed down with years and experience, would utilize and welcome.

At intervals throughout the *Autobiography*, Therese reveals an astuteness in her judgment of men, lay and clerical alike. Her sheltered upbringing did not hinder her from observing the roles played by men and women of the world. This is especially true of her journey to Rome, where she noted the very human defects of some clergymen and came to a full realization of her Carmelite vocation, namely, the obligation to pray always for priests.

Therese completed her Little Way on earth hidden in a Carmelite monastery. Some secular authors describe this period of her

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 152.

life in knowing fashion, but only one who has lived the conventual life can wholly appreciate the heroic self-denial constantly practised by this young nun in the observance of her Little Way. In writing of this period she declared, "Many pages of this story will never be read upon earth."[9] She told of sufferings which could not be disclosed, yet it is not difficult to surmise their nature. Close study of her life reveals her keenest sufferings to have been those of heart and mind. Only a deep spirituality could have sustained her, when one recalls that during her greatest trials her soul endured a torturing aridity.

Religious life, no matter how remunerative spiritually, is not a natural one. The primary aim is the sanctification of the soul. In the search for perfection, religious can become very self-centered, if, while laboring for the sanctification of their own souls, they fail to share the gift of God's love with others. "Love is repaid by love alone,"[10] declared Therese, who understood how often the letter kills, especially when there is failure to realize that charity covers a multitude of sins.

From all accounts the Carmel of Lisieux proved to be no earthly paradise and Therese, young as she was, had the wisdom to realize her entrance would not usher her into a vestibule of heaven. It did not take the new postulant long to learn that her remaining days were to be spent in the midst of a very human family, despite the holiness achieved by many of them. Far from being the convent darling, it would seem that she was often a source of exasperation. The prioress, admitted by members of her own community to have been a strange woman, treated Therese with great severity, although undoubtedly appreciative of her spiritual worth. Even in the novice mistress the young postulant found little consolation. According to Therese she was a holy and well-meaning soul whose method of initiating one into the intricacies of the spiritual life ran according to pattern. She seemed incapable of realizing that the highly sensitized soul of Therese could not subsist on a diet of spiritual platitudes. Therese wrote very frankly that this nun's idea of spiritual direction became for her a torture and martyrdom.

It is not an understatement to say that what causes much distaste among the critics of St. Therese is her frequent use of the

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 211.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 204.

word "little" and her references to herself as being a "little flower." We are told that it is only in English-speaking countries that she is alluded to thus. The simile was one which she borrowed from Blessed Theophane Venard, a young French priest martyred for the Faith in Tongking, for whom she had a profound admiration.

Throughout her autobiography Therese makes frequent references to flowers, which in their numerous varieties she used as comparative studies for souls. In little flowers blooming unseen, yet scenting the air with their fragrance, she saw a symbol of her own soul. Yet few seem to realize that these flowers usually give forth their most enchanting perfume only when bruised or crushed. Unless her similes are understood, Therese would not blame anyone for thinking her sentimental in applying the title of "little flower" to herself, because she was a fairly tall person and no diminutive doll. Actually, the sturdiest Saxon could eliminate flowers and diminutives and still follow the Little Way.

As for the word "little," readers of the autobiography have been heard to remark that its frequent recurrence "nearly drives them crazy." Therese was a French girl living in an era when hearts and flowers provided the motif of the day. Consequently, she could hardly escape altogether from the ribbon and lace expressions of the period. According to the dictionary the word "little" may convey a number of meanings. Apart from reference to size, it may mean small in importance or unobtrusive, and it is in the latter sense Therese really employs the word. The Little Way is actually the unobtrusive way, the lowly way of humility.

Among the saints who sternly advocated repressing human affection Therese, by her own admission, could not be numbered. She failed to understand those who practised rigid detachment in regard to friends and family. "A heart given to God loses nothing of its natural affection," she tells us. "On the contrary, that affection grows stronger by becoming purer and more spiritual."[11] To the American mind her expressions of affection may at times seem extravagant, but it must be remembered that she came of a nation which is not ashamed of showing emotion.

Apart from the daily trials common to all, and which she bore so uncommonly well, Therese suffered chiefly through love and

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

faith. Of her capacity for love, with its concomitant hypersensitivity to pain, we have already written. She never lost this gift of God, but learned to utilize it, not only for her own sanctification, but for that of others. Although it may be said that, unlike other religious, she did not have to tear up roots by being assigned from one mission to another, she had been willing to make the sacrifice of separation from monastery and country in consenting to go to another Carmel in far off Hanoi. Ill health prevented her leaving Lisieux, but she was a genuine missionary at heart.

Therese would fail to appreciate any tribute, unless full credit be given to one whose influence in her life cannot be overestimated. Along the hidden path to glory she was accompanied by Our Lady, whom she loved with a filial and steadfast devotion and to whom she lovingly referred as "more Mother than Queen."[12]

"For love is strong as death" (Canticle 8, 6). With her body pain-wracked by advanced tuberculosis, God permitted that she suffer great temptations against faith and to know a desolation of spirit undreamed of by most of the nuns in Carmel. The devil would not allow such a prize to escape him unmolested. "You may think that I am exaggerating the night of my soul," she writes. "If one judged by the poems I have composed this year it might seem that I have been inundated with consolation, that I am a child for whom the veil of faith is almost rent asunder. . . . But it is not a veil . . .; it is a wall which reaches to the very heavens shutting out the starry sky. When I sing in my verses of the happiness of heaven and of the eternal possession of God, I feel no joy; I sing only of *what I wish to believe.*"[13] And in this anguished cry one discovers the crux, the sum and substance which constituted the heroic and unsentimental sanctity of St. Therese of Lisieux. Unless this sublime example of loving God with the *will* is comprehended, one can never understand why Therese Martin is numbered among the most outstanding saints in the Catholic Church.

E. B.

Let one principle guide your life in all its diverse operations. Let nothing turn you from the path of consistency, from wholehearted loyalty and affection towards God.

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 226.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

VOCATIONS

THE Church is being torn by persecution of an open and subtle nature. Upon the members of the Mystical Body rests the obligation of cooperating with the Holy Spirit in His designs to form the Crucified Christ in the Church and in the soul of each of her members by means of the joyous acceptance of suffering of all kinds. Now is the time to resist joyfully, yes, even unto blood, anything that will thwart the holy will of God as is manifested in the circumstances of our day. The time of mediocrity is past in the Church and in religious orders. By this we mean that we must know and live the full life of Christ. Either we are going to live the Gospel in its entirety — Bethlehem to Calvary, to the Risen Life, to the entire possession by the Holy Spirit of our whole being — or we are going to fall by the wayside, when we shall have to face the alternative of choosing or rejecting Christ as an increasing number of Catholics are forced to do.

Vocations are on the decline in the Church because we have taken the Gospel and watered it down. There are too few saints in our religious communities. Yes, we have swarms of good souls, pious souls, but this is not enough. The evils of our times and the responsibility of becoming other Christs Crucified and the gaining the grace for other souls to do the same demand saints. They are wanting, or we should have the increase in vocations. We need souls who are determined to stop short of nothing but Calvary, souls who are willing to be crucified by their own miseries and sins and, in spite of this, force the Merciful Heart of Jesus to fill them with the abundance of His graces by a trust that is born of many and bitter nights of the spirit, souls who become an incarnation of the spirit of their orders by perfect fidelity to grace, as one Marianist maintains must be done if the individual religious, and the whole institute, is to become holy and reproduce itself as the Holy Spirit intended that it should.

A religious who strives to carry out her Holy Rule perfectly, relying not on her own strength, but upon the indwelling Trinity within her, who strives to be docile to the inspirations of grace with this same reliance of the perfections of God, and who lets God purify by any kind of suffering that He wishes to send, will become a saint. She will be like a living flame of love, an osten-

sorium which mirrors only Jesus and an instrument of grace in obtaining for her order the infinite blessing of increase in numbers and in divine charity. A soul thus imbued will become a soul of reparation, identified every day with the divine Victim in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass in a more sacrificial manner. Thus cooperating with her divine Spouse, she shall bring forth, as did Mary, the blessed Fruit of the Holy Spirit—Jesus—in the souls of young virgins whom Jesus destines to espouse to himself in the spirit of the order. This spiritual bringing forth takes place only on Calvary, when the soul determines to let nothing stand in her way of total self-surrender to the divine will. This desire and persistent effort to become a saint brings along with it the full blossoming of the life of the Holy Spirit in the soul. Prayer becomes continual, simple, and fruitful, because Jesus and Mary become the principles of its operations. There exists in the soul a continual desire to fill the Church with souls espoused to Jesus. Truly, this desire will be heard and souls will be given to the Church who will go the way fully and thus help Jesus carry on the Redemption. As regards the life of reparation, surely, this becomes full and culminates in the joyous abandonment to the divine will in everything.

The essential thing in our apostolate for vocations is this life of union. Personal contacts, lectures and literature become fruitful only when this is the case.

When many religious from the various communities decide to run the way of God's Commandments in Love, a great change will take place—our novitiates will be filled with souls who are on fire with the love of God. Then we shall fulfill our mission to carry the Crucified Christ to every creature.

Yes, even if only one religious grasps the importance of sanctity and lives it, her congregation will flourish. St. Therese has done it; we must do it, if we are to meet the challenge of our times and fill the whole earth with souls who will carry the Gospel to every living creature.

A SISTER OF THE POOR OF ST. FRANCIS

Covington, Kentucky

Acknowledge humbly that all your justice which you esteem so highly is worthless before God; that you have never really done anything for Him, and that you are at best an unprofitable servant who has only done what he ought to do.

ONE SISTER TO ANOTHER (V)

DEAR SISTER:

We stand on the threshold of May, a-tiptoe, ready to sing our love song to the Lady-Mary, this year an anniversary song. It is a timely time to turn back the centuries, and stand in spirit on the threshold of her Nazareth home, to watch her at her work, that we may learn from her the way of wisdom, the way of littleness.

The Holy One who is to be born of her is little more than a month in the womb. At the word of her *Fiat*, the Holy Spirit implanted in her chaste womb the seed of Life and, with growing realization of the great reality, she has felt that life begin to throb and continue to throb within her. I wonder if her human mother heart longed to form the tiny limbs into perfection, to multiply the facets of the human character developing there beneath her immaculate heart, to see each feature of the God-man unfolding there. But was there anything she could do *consciously* to help in that wonderful work within? She, the perfect Woman (shall we say *"although"* she was or *"since"* she was?), like the humblest daughter of Eve, can *surrender* to the law. It was the direct action of the Holy Spirit that had set the law in motion, that is true, but it is the same law that operates in any daughter of the race who cooperates in the generation of life.

The more quietly and lovingly she goes about her daily duties, surrendering to that law of nature at work within, the more sure and silent is the natural, normal development of the little one beneath her heart. So she goes about her tasks, offering God the perpetual voiceless song of a quiet heart surrendering to His ways — except for that one splendid moment when her stored up joy overflowed a *Magnificat* into the ears of Elizabeth.

Since writing these words, I found my meaning infinitely better expressed by Mary Perkins in *Mind the Baby*: "This is the special joy of those months . . . to know that God is using you in such a special way, that you are as it were His loom on which He is weaving the substance of a human body, that it is His work which is going on in you, that He is watching over it to see that it comes out according to His will. When you are having a baby, you cannot help being God's instrument. Your body is for those nine months what your whole self ought to be all the time — the instrument through which God is working to achieve His plans." How suggestive of Mary, "the woman wrapped in silence," who

gave "all she had to give and ever more," teaching us the way of wisdom, the way of surrender.

Sooner or later in the religious life we realize — it may be very soon, it may be very late, but realize we must — our utter littleness in the task that is ours of growing up in the likeness of Christ. The price of growth in the life of faith — and it is in *faith* He has espoused us — is to *see* less and less of what is transforming within, as we *see* more and more what God is asking of us and of every soul that He calls by baptism to grow up into the perfect stature of Christ. It is as if we live on a surface, whereas all the vital action is deep within.

The conquests of self that we must make for Christ are disappearing deeper and deeper — self is taking its stand in those subtle strongholds of our personality where we feel powerless to pursue, incapable of attack, that is, with anything like a *sure, conscious* plan. Then it is that we turn our eyes to Mary and *see* God's way.

> Through her we may see Him,
> Made sweeter not made dim,
> And her hand leaves His light
> Sifted to suit our sight.

Ours, too, must be the little way, the way of surrender, surrender to the laws of supernature. He who begot us in the womb before the daystar, implanted at baptism in the very essence of our soul sanctifying grace, the germ, as St. Thomas says, of eternal life, that we might be "made comformable to the image of His Son." It is the hour to sing a new song of surrender, of surrender at every level of our being to the laws of growth in grace.

Surrender to the demands of duty. Religious obedience, Dom Marmion tells us, has the power to pursue self into the deepest psychological recesses of personality and, therefore, if we surrender to its action without reserve, it can kill self at the roots. Needless to say, this will not come about, unless we follow the exhortation of St. Francis de Sales: This must be the law of your obedience written in a large hand — *nothing from force, all from love.*

Surrender to circumstances — we must think of them as Love's choice for us. Like the womb of Mary chosen from all eternity to fashion the humanity of the Word, they will mold us unto the likeness of Christ. Elizabeth of the Trinity has expressed this simply: Mary is "the Mother of grace whose mission is to form in the soul the living and faithful image of the First-born, the

Son of the Eternal, of Him who was the perfect 'Praise of Glory' of His Father."

Surrender to the daily action of Christ in the *Sacrament of Love*, His sacramental union with consecrated souls. See each holy Communion as God feeding the God within us, as eternal Life augmenting the divine life of our souls, as an ever more intimate union with the Bridegroom, "a preliminary to that union with Him, ever actual and perpetual, which will be the consummation of eternal life." As Dom Marmion would put it, love of Christ with the whole heart is a gift which only God can give and it is in holy Communion that He gives it.

If you have never read Bernadot's *From Holy Communion to the Trinity*, do so. It inspires devotion for this daily spiritual banquet at which God feeds His chosen ones, and does so in the only *sound* way too — emphasizing dogma, for it is truth that feeds the soul and warms the heart. Father Kane's *School of Love* does the same thing but in a simpler, more popular form. There is a difference, too. Bernadot emphasizes the mystical union of the soul with Christ; Father Kane stresses the mysticism of little things, "the holiness of the humdrum." He makes it the real test of our growth in eucharistic life, stressing the *hidden* nature of the transformation, the surface o*rdinariness* of life. Indeed, eucharistic living teaches true sacramental living and therefore rescues the soul simultaneously from superficiality and futile introspection.

This way of surrender to God *as He comes through* all *the ordinary channels* of our life in His service, is Mary's way, the way of littleness, the way of self-forgetfulness, and its first fruit is the consummation of transforming union. It is the way of simplicity born of love. It does away with endless introspection, trying to pierce through the mazes of self-love to find the exact stronghold against which to direct our spiritual shrapnel. It trusts all to the Fatherly love of God, as did the Little Flower, and to the motherly love of Mary, as did Jesus, the Son of Mary. It leaves to them all concern over "ascetic labor," which remains a responsibility at every stage of the spiritual life, and leaves to them, too, the transforming union with the divine Bridegroom, which must always be the desire but never the preoccupation of the spouse of Christ. It sends the soul forward to the accomplishment of that union as Mary went, "like a lovely dawn which, beginning to break, increases continually in brightness till perfect daylight." And the

fruit of her union as the *sponsa Verbi* will issue forth from the womb of her daily fidelity as simply, as easily, as self-forgettingly as "the dew in April that falleth on the spray."

This letter is my special greeting to you, dear Sister, on the anniversary of your consecration in God's service, but it reaches out to all spouses of the King who began their religious life in the month of the Queen Mother. In a broad sense that embraces all His spouses. For what religious cannot think back to that particular Maytime of her life, when as a maiden she *saw* the beauty of Mary, all bright as the morn, all fair as the moon, and loved her exceedingly? What Sister does not feel her pulse quicken with the return of May as she hears again the love-call that drew her to run after Mary in the odor of her ointments? Sometimes, along the years, she has rejoiced as a giant to run in the way, sometimes she has faltered and limped. But always in Maytime she has been drawn with renewed eagerness to find Him whom her soul loveth, to hold Him fast, and not to let Him go until she has brought Him into the home of her mother, into the chamber of the mother who bore her in Christ.

This May greeting, I know, will set the chords of your heart humming with our Mother's theme song, which we have heard so often and loved in all the varied keys. "The stuff of sanctity is in the 'now' just as it is." "It matters not what you do (barring sin, of course); it matters much the love, submission, wholeheartedness with which you do it." "God's will! What does anything else matter?"

Its melody, perhaps, will awaken a memory, of that time we were both "down-daunted," sagging at the seams, as it were, in that low period between *real* winter and *real* spring. Remember? I brought out the little calendar-cherub as a symbol of the way. (I am enclosing a sketch, but, since my art is not the kind that communicateth with eloquence, accept a word sketch, too.) A bleak landscape — out from the snow, *deep* snow, stands a single cross-road post, pointing straight ahead, bearing the numbers of the New Year. The cherub, a red muffler wrapped around his neck and tied in a big knot just above his perky wings, is plodding in the direction indicated, holding aloft a four-leaf clover, proof sufficient he will not be "down-daunted."

We observed the deep tracks, mute witness to "plodding," but saw in his jauntiness a suggestion of "flying." We noted how

small was the bluebird perched above the number, how delicate the flush marking the future, and reminded ourselves how much faith, and hope, and love it requires just to keep on keeping on. The tracks in the snow meant only one thing — follow in the way, working at the little things for God, casting your care upon Him.

And now it *is* spring — the snow is over and gone — the cardinal calls from the woods — the spouse hears in his love-note the voice of the Bridegroom: Make haste, my love, my beautiful one, and come!

May the response of our hearts be ever: Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Your Sister in the way, Mary's way. . . .

DEAR SISTER:

"Welcome as the flowers in May" was your lovely letter and its happy reminder of Maytime, Mary-time, with its religious anniversaries and also, in my own case, those precious childhood "days of grace" — baptism, first holy Communion and Confirmation. Somehow, it seems, Mary was, even then, gently forming. guiding, leading toward the happy day of espousal with her Son.

The whole lesson of Mary's surrender to the "Life" developing within is indeed a precious one for us. Yes, as we go on in the religious life, it does seem more and more that all things must be reducible to the one big fact of union with God, this surrender of which you so beautifully speak. And how simple life becomes, if we only *trust* God to the point symbolized by attaching our signature to a blank piece of paper!

I think here is where we need Mary's help and the inspiration of her example, for that utter abandon was the essence of her living and of her sanctity. If we can believe and love enough to trust her with the work of our perfection, certainly she will lead us to greater faith and love and the consequent trust, or abandon, which Christ wants of His spouses.

The idea of *total consecration* to Mary is really not new, is it? After all, if any religious goes thoughtfully over her various community prayers, she will find its essence there.

Some time ago, I was made very conscious of putting real meaning into the words of vocal prayers, as I listened to a very simple instruction given by a zealous young priest placed in charge of a new negro parish. His words to his flock (most of whom were non-Catholics) were always simple and his examples homely and

practical. I recall vividly an instruction on prayer. If we wanted to ask a favor of a very beautiful and wealthy lady we would probably greet and compliment her first; then we would know that nothing would please her more than to admire her beautiful child; after that we would feel that we could make our request. So it is as we say our *Hail Mary's* — greeting Mary, praising her ("full of grace," "blessed among women"), admiring her beautiful Child ("blessed is the Fruit of thy womb"), then presenting our request to her ("pray for us sinners — now — and at the hour of our death"). The *Lord's Prayer*, too, he showed, is based on the same general plan, and so are nearly all of the prayers of the Church which contain a petition: first *you praise* — then *you ask*.

Sometimes a simple, homely lesson like this can do us religious more practical good than reading volumes of ascetical or mystical works, or hearing learned conferences. I mean to suggest that a thoughtful and loving attention to our Community "Mary-prayers" (to all our prayers, in fact) can be a "second spring," a new Maytime in this our Mary-life, in which our Queen will help us toward this life of surrender to which we aspire.

May this spiritual renewal be yours and mine, and well up in the souls of all those who follow — "in the way, Mary's way."

A NEW FOUNDATION

SOME of our readers have been following the heroic struggle of the handful of Benedictine Sisters in Boulder, Colorado, who for the last sixteen years gave both Catholics and non-Catholics a shining example of prayer and joy in the midst of hard work, poverty and charity. They will rejoice with them over the recent decree of the Holy See permitting them to open a novitiate in Colorado. For others it will be necessary to add that they stem from the old Benedictine Abbey of Eichstaett in Germany, where the nuns in solemn vows perform the full Divine Office. Less than a year ago the Mother Superior of Colorado (St. Walburga Convent, Boulder, Route 1, Box 234) was solemnly blessed as abbess and now governs the Motherhouse in Germany.

The editor of SPONSA REGIS has long been in contact with the young community in Colorado and was edified to observe how they constructed their own buildings, how with prayer and charity

and the work of their own hands they reaped large crops from their farm at the foot of the magnificent Rockies, how they learned English and became American citizens and, above all, how they persevered in the liturgical life and spirituality so dear to them in their millenium of tradition. Now that the first pioneer stage is over and God is rewarding their tireless charity to those poorer than themselves, they are seeking to take deeper and more permanent root in the American Vineyard of the Lord.

The editor knows, also, that many have inquired precisely about the type of liturgico-contemplative life for which these nuns have literally spent themselves. The over-all aim is "to glorify God in all things," to set up a life of prayer and activity in which the *Opus Dei* always takes first place and is performed with all possible beauty, dignity and peace. Subserving this devotion to God is the daily study and meditation on the Psalms and holy reading according to the Rule of St. Benedict. The growing Community also seeks to continue an ample measure of manual labor for its self-support, besides expanding its art work (which is already known in almost all the States) and exercising their skill in sewing in the making of sacred vestments. The service of the Archdiocese of Denver will include, as heretofore, catechetical instruction in the neighboring parishes and missions.

We heartily recommend this worthy cause to the prayers of our readers and to their Sisterly charity in passing the word to prospective candidates. THE EDITOR.

LIBRARY NOTES

THE MESSAGE OF THERESE OF LISIEUX. By M. M. Philipon, O.P. Translated by E. J. Ross. The Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland. 1950. xv-121 pages, cloth $2.00, paper 90 cents.

"These pages, written in order to spread the message of Thérèse on the occasion of the jubilee year of her death (1897-1947), merely repeat in simpler form the essential ideas of a more thorough examination of the spirituality of St. Thérèse of Lisieux which the author will publish later" (p. xiv). A theologian, who has studied for ten years the testimonies of the process of canonization plus the unpublished pertinent documents of Carmel of Lisieux, who has carefully discussed with the sisters of little Thérèse what he has written, offers us an approved interpretation of the life and teaching of the saintly heroine of littleness.

What is new in this book — and who is not acquainted with the Little Flower? — is the author's organizing her spirit of sanctity into a little theology. We need that sort of writing, if the influence of this saint is going to permeate the schools, the manuals of theology. In her God gave the Church a new pattern of simplicity, childhood, pure love: that pattern is now being organized as a guide for all. "For the majority of our modern characters, weakened and overcharged with work, this is no longer an age suited to the great mortifications practised by the saints of former times. . . . It is time for us to return with Thérèse to the simplicity of the Gospel" (p. 114). All the essential notes, illustrated with all the attractiveness of her spirit, find their place in this manual of the way of spiritual littleness. P. R. B.

♦

STORM OF GLORY. St. Therese of Lisieux. By John Beevers. Sheed and Ward, New York. 1950. vii-231 pages, cloth $3.00.

We know much about the spirituality of Thérèse Martin, about the events of her life and the glory with which God has crowned her death. What is new in this volume is the point of view of our own generation, the wealth of human interest put into the catchy modern language of a radio broadcaster who is at once a scholar and believer. At every turn he senses the paradox of sanctity and everyday life, as lived by the Little Flower in her "little way," and impresses the reader with its attractive force. But we should not say "the Little Flower," because the author resents it as a sentimental obstacle to seeing the Cross in Thérèse's life. If we read that she was "tall and well-built," then evidently it is nonsense to think of her as a tiny nun; her littleness is all spiritual.

The *Storm of Glory* is everywhere well received, as far as we can judge. It follows the publication, by the same publishers, of the *Collected Letters of St. Thérèse of Lisieux* (see *Sponsa Regis*, April, 1950, page 192). The author used fresh sources, literary and personal, and so provides knowledge which was hitherto not available in English. One comes away from reading the *Storm of Glory* with fresh enthusiasm, too, for this saint of freedom in the spiritual life. And we need this book very much for the enthusiasm it generates for holiness; for great love, sacrifice and prayer, the three pillars of her extraordinary way of ordinariness.

There are two parts. The first is all about the family background at Alencon and Lisieux, the two spots on earth where

Thérèse's short life ran most of its course. God reached far back to prepare the way for His chosen one; one sees God preparing the marriage of her parents, training them in sorrow and in those family virtues which stood the nun in such good stead in Carmel. One sees how God fashioned the saint out of a sensitive child with normal affections, fancies and trials. One is even grateful for details about the parrot and her pet dog, the little fishing trips with her father. Then comes the unfolding of her vocation and the pilgrimage to Rome. The author makes forthright statements about the human ineptitude of a superior, who with her ill-balance and manifold weakness did not extinguish the flame of charity in Sister Thérèse; sanctity only flourished the more under that suffering. The story of her convent life, with its aridity, failing health, corrections, suffering from the cold, her charity to her sisters in religion, her humility and obedience, last sickness and death, is retold with the central spiritual theme of her love always in view.

The second part is the author's own contribution of valuable reflection on the things that made Sister Thérèse the saint she is. He analyzes her distinctive character, her essential message for our time of crisis, her timeless appeal and, especially, her little way of spiritual childhood. These essays on her spiritual greatness are valuable in that they contain the norms, only only of Thérèse's life in God, but of all sanctity for our times. Love is the key to her holiness; yet, one feels a lack of emphasis on her character of victim, which is the climax of her love and spirituality. True, the data and words of Thérèse are there ("I offer myself as a sacrificial victim to Thy merciful Love . . ." page 177), but one feels the author does not sufficiently appreciate or penetrate that formality of love (the next volume reviewed in this issue, *Little Queen, St. Therese of the Child Jesus*, is much truer to the saint in that respect of victimhood). It seems necessary to criticize also, that the author sets up unnecessary extremes and antitheses between saints in his desire to describe the distinctiveness of Thérèse (e.g., pages 159 to 167). If the saints are God's handiwork, then why speak of "bloody macerations of the flesh and savage attempts to destroy all natural delights" (page 166) in some unnamed saints? It is good literary taste, but ignorance, when he classifies St. Ignatius of Antioch among the "remote, distant figures, embalmed by the centuries in stiff, hierarchic attitudes" (page 201). One senses in the veiled remarks of "devout dissectors," "pious and scholarly

industry" (page 203), the same trend to glorify our saint at the expense of theologians. A theologian would not have made the statement that "she was granted no supernatural gifts" (page 214). But these stray remarks do not destroy the essential greatness of the book, still less of St. Thérèse. P. R. B.

♦

LITTLE QUEEN. St. Therese of the Child Jesus. By Mary Fabyan Windeatt. Illustrated by Gedge Harmon. A Grail Publication, St. Meinrad, Indiana. 1950 (third printing). 167 pages, cloth $2.00.

The author, well-known for more than a dozen lives of saints, successfully achieves a great task, namely, of rewriting the autobiography of St. Therese for children. The saint retells her own story to the young. The test of the "little way" is that it is here convincingly adapted, with its whole wealth of spirituality, to the minds of the little ones. We find here all the life lessons on the interior life (humility, recollection, abandonment, trusting love, victimhood for souls) reproduced faithfully and appealingly. It should go far to introduce our youth to sanctity. The title was her father's favorite name for Therese. It will help to shift the consciousness of young girls from the stupid anatomy queens of their idolatry to the enthronement of true love and the queenhood of virtue. P. R. B.

♦

THE MINIATURE QUESTION BOX. An Abridged Edition of the Question Box. By Rev. Bertrand L. Conway, C.S.P. 1950. The Paulist Press, 401 West 59th Street, New York 19, N. Y. 250 pages, paper cover, 35 cents (postpaid 45 cents), $30.00 a hundred.

♦

FATIMA OR WORLD SUICIDE. By Rt. Rev. Wm. C. McGrath, P.A. The Scarboro Foreign Mission Society, Scarboro Bluffs, Ontario, Canada. 1950. x-94 pages, cloth $1.00.

This handy book contains the essential message of Our Lady of Fatima, the story of her apparitions in Portugal and of the persons associated with them, along with the "Voice of the Pope" concerning the meaning of Fatima for world peace. Monsignor McGrath has accompanied the American Fatima statue on its two-year pilgrimage, has spoken to countless thousands, has seen the miracles of grace and, in general, is filled with the urgency of Our Lady's message for our helpless times.

♦

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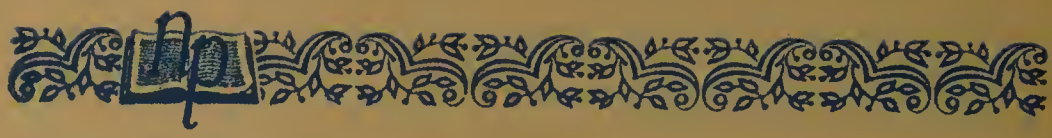

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